Jared Kushner's Luxury Resort in Albania Launched Amid Controversy

by **Vladimir Karaj** — 4 weeks ago

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Cocaine and Luxury Prostitution Spread Across Albania's Provinces

Heavy machinery has begun work in the heart of the protected area to establish the construction site. Photo courtesy of Taulant Bino.

On the sunny Thursday of April 30, environmental activist Taulant Bino was near the picturesque Hidrovori beach on the edge of the Narta lagoon, north of the village of Zvërnec, when he noticed a convoy of heavy trucks carrying construction materials and a group of workers fencing off the protected area.

Several excavators were flattening the land between the pine trees.

Bino began photographing the trucks, but several workers asked him to stop, claiming that he had entered the fenced-off area.

“I asked the people there — engineers and workers wearing helmets,” Taulant Bino told BIRN. “From the informal conversation, they gave me the impression that this was related to Jared Kushner’s project and that they were building a camp for the workers.”

Concerned about the works taking place inside one of Albania’s most important ecosystems, the protected Pishë Poro–Narta landscape, Taulant Bino unsuccessfully searched for an information board about the project, but found none. The area enjoys legal protection and serves as a unique habitat for numerous waterbirds and wildlife species, making it a key site for biodiversity conservation in Albania.

Officials from the Administration of Protected Areas in Vlorë, known by its Albanian acronym AdZM, also said they had no information about the works. When AdZM inspectors visited the construction site on Saturday, May 2, they requested the building

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permit documents, but company representatives instead presented them with a letter from the National Territorial Development Agency, AZHT.

The document was not a construction permit, but rather correspondence between the National Territorial Development Agency, AZHT, and the company "Zvërnec South Adriatic Development," informing the latter that the National Territorial Council had approved, on April 29, a construction permit for preparatory fencing works.

However, AZHT also noted that the National Territorial Council's decision had not yet been formally signed off by the relevant authorities, as the review process and the fulfilment of required conditions had not yet been completed.

The company "Zvërnec South Adriatic Development" received two development permits for the construction of a large-scale tourist resort in Zvërnec in January and April 2025 from the National Territorial Council, headed by Prime Minister Edi Rama, but the permits have yet to be officially published.

The development permits are linked to the project unveiled by Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of the U.S. president, in the spring of 2024, but the company that benefited from the permits granted by the National Territorial Council has undisclosed ownership.

Two environmental organisations, Albanian Ornithological Society and Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania, denounced the works in the protected area, describing them as "a massacre."

"An unidentified brigade of excavators and heavy tracked machinery continues the destruction of the Protected Landscape," Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania said in a post on its Facebook page.

Local and central authorities gave contradictory and unclear responses to BIRN regarding the intervention in the protected area before the construction permit had been officially published. The Prime Minister's Office and the Environment Ministry did not respond by the time of publication, while the company "Zvërnec South Adriatic Development" could not be reached for comment.

Unpublished Permits

Plans to transform the Pishë Poro–Narta wetland ecosystem into construction sites for luxury resorts began in 2021, when the Council of Ministers downgraded its protection status from a "managed nature reserve" to a "protected landscape." The government also decided to shrink the area of the ecosystem by more than 5,000 hectares.

In 2024, Jared Kushner sparked considerable surprise when he told the U.S. media outlet Bloomberg about his plans to invest in luxury resorts on Sazan Island and in Zvërnec. According to the initial plans, around 10,000 tourist accommodation units were expected to be built in the Zvërnec area along a green strip of land separating the Narta lagoon from the Adriatic Sea.

The AZHT document confirms that the construction permit is still under review and has not yet been formally signed by the responsible institutions.

The company "Zvërnec South Adriatic Development" was established in August 2024 and, within eight months, secured two development permits from the National Territorial Council for tourist resorts in Zvërnec, although the permits had still not been officially published by early March.

"Zvërnec South Adriatic Development" is owned by the offshore company "Dutch Trust Management BV," registered in the Netherlands. According to documents filed with Albania's National Business Centre, the company is linked through a network of shell companies to the Sazan Island project and to Qatari investor brothers Ramez Al-

Khayyat and Mohamad Al-Khayyat.

Following the development permits, “Zvërnec South Adriatic Development” also received, on April 29, a permit to carry out fencing and preparatory works related to the construction of access roads within the property, according to an AZHT document obtained by BIRN.

However, AZHT informed the company that the permit in question was still awaiting formal approval and signatures from the responsible institutions.

An employee of the Administration of Protected Areas, speaking to BIRN on condition of anonymity, said they had been unable to interpret the legal meaning of the document presented during the inspection carried out on May 2 and had therefore requested clarification from the central office in Tirana.

“They did not provide us with official documents, but they gave us a permit from AZHT, which we were not in a position to interpret legally, so we forwarded it to headquarters,” he said.

He said they decided to order a suspension of the works, but company representatives responded that any further communication would have to be handled with Tirana.

“We went there on Saturday and issued an order suspending the works,” he said, adding that the heavy machinery remains on site and that the Administration of Protected Areas is monitoring the area with guards.

On May 6, environmental activists documented the continuation of works by heavy machinery in Pishë Poro for the establishment of the construction site.

At the Mercy of the Bulldozers

Works on access roads and the construction site continued on May 6 in Pishë Poro. Photo courtesy of Zydjon Vorpsi.

The passage of a convoy of trucks loaded with construction materials heading toward the coast at the end of April also alarmed residents of Zvërnec. One resident told BIRN that he had seen the trucks being escorted by “a delegation of luxury cars.”

“I saw around eight ‘dalika’ [Greek for trucks] loaded with gravel, and then what looked like a delegation of cars arrived,” he said on condition of anonymity, describing the matter as “sensitive business.”

He further explained that the trucks stopped on the road linking the Zvërnec Monastery with the coastline, and that two of them unloaded their cargo onto the road.

“They told us they were building a road, but I don’t understand what this is about,” he

added, saying it appeared to him to be a show of force, as the heavy vehicles left immediately after the luxury cars, which he suspected were carrying officials.

Kosta Xhaho, a representative of the environmental organisation Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania in Vlorë, told BIRN that the area where the works are taking place had burned down two years ago. He added that 600 pine saplings had been planted to rehabilitate it.

In an official statement, Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania accused the authorities of abandoning the territory “they are supposed to protect, leaving it at the mercy of bulldozers and gravel that is replacing the vegetation.”

“The most important wildlife area in Pishë Poro–Narta is being plundered in a bandit-like manner, without any public notice,” Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania said.

The other environmental organisation, Albanian Ornithological Society, led by Taulant Bino, reacted along similar lines.

“They are here, and this time with bulldozers…,” Albanian Ornithological Society said in a statement.
“Jared Kushner’s plan is no longer just a polished rendering, because works in the Hidrovori area have begun and foresee more than 20,000 accommodation units and over 10,000 visitors per day, right in one of the most sensitive areas where three protected zones meet,” Albanian Ornithological Society added.

Contradictory Reactions

During the works carried out on April 30, 2026. Photo courtesy of Taulant Bino.

Local and central authorities have given contradictory accounts and appear unable to say whether the works in the protected Pishë Poro–Narta area began with or without a permit. Bruna Mersini, the mayor of Vlorë, told BIRN that the works in the area were being carried out with authorisation from AZHT.

“It is the company behind the Zvërnec project that is carrying out the fencing of the construction site. They have authorisation from AZHT,” Bruna Mersini said. When informed that the permit is not issued by AZHT but by the National Territorial Council, Mayor Mersini referred BIRN to the central authorities.

“I don’t know, I’m not aware of the details. You should ask AZHT and the National Territorial Council about this, but they are carrying out fencing works there and have presented a document from AZHT,” Bruna Mersini said.

On the other hand, Afrim Qëndro, head of the National Inspectorate for Territorial Protection, IKMT, said that the works in the area did not fall under the jurisdiction of the institution he leads. Qëndro said the works involved the reopening of an existing road and that responsibility rested solely with the Administration of Protected Areas.

“It is not within our jurisdiction. We have no information about the start of construction works. What is taking place is part of the widening of the road. Opening a road in a protected area is the responsibility of the Administration of Protected Areas,” Afrim Qëndro said by phone.

Qëndro said he had also discussed the case with Mayor Bruna Mersini. But when informed that Mersini had confirmed the works were related to the establishment of a construction site, Qëndro changed his position.

“I will send inspectors tomorrow morning to verify what the mayor has told you,” Afrim Qëndro said.

Etiketa: Afrim Qendro | AOS | Bruna Mersini | Edi Rama | Jared Kushner | Pishë Poro -Nartë | PPNEA | Taulant Bino | The Ministry of Environment | The National Territorial Council | The National Territorial Development Agency | The Protected Area | The Resort in Zvërnec | Zvërnec South Adriatic Development

Merrini lajmet tona me email! Abonohu

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